A Matter of Honor

By
Barbara
Yechton

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A Matter of Honor

BY BARBARA YECHTON

By Barbara Yechton.

LITTLE SAINT HILARY and other stories. Illustrated by Minna Brown, - - 60 cents.

A MATTER OF HONOR and other stories. Illustrated by Harriet R. Richards, - 60 cents.

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THOMAS WHITTAKER,
PUBLISHER,
2 AND 3 BIBLE HOUSE, NEW YORK.

“ Then I looked again, and sure enough there were two big, dreadful eyes looking down at me.”

(A Matter of Honor.)

A MATTER OF HONOR

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

BARBARA YECHTON

AUTHOR OF "CHRISTINE'S INSPIRATION," "LITTLE SAINT HILARY," "'GENTLE HEART' STORIES," "INGLESIDE"

ILLUSTRATED BY

HARRIET ROOSEVELT RICHARDS

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"No life can be pure in its purpose and strong in its strife,
and all lives not be purer and stronger thereby."

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By THOMAS WHITTAKER.

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AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
TO
MY LITTLE COUSIN
SAMUEL MILBY HARRINGTON
IN REMEMBRANCE OF PLEASANT HOURS SPENT
ON BOARD THE "DELAWARE."

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A MATTER OF HONOR.

MAMMA says, to make my story clear, I had better begin at the very beginning. I'm afraid that will make it rather long, but I suppose I'd better do it. Well, the first thing was a great big letter that came addressed to "Captain Fortescue"—that's my papa. It had a big red seal on the flap of the envelope, and I was pretty sure it was something particular, because I saw "Washington" postmarked on it, and I've noticed that whenever papa is to go to any new place he gets a letter from there; and sure enough when he came home from Philadelphia that afternoon and read his letter it was just as I thought, only it was a surprise, too. I don't remember the name of the man who wrote it, or all that was in it, but one part was asking papa if he could get ready to take command of the *Delaware* in ten days' time. You may not know it (I didn't just at first), but the *Delaware* is one of the White Squadron; and, papa says, one of the finest war-ships in the world.

When papa finished reading his letter he waved it in the air. "Hurrah!" he said, his eyes shining just as they do when he's going to say something funny. "Go? I should think I would go! I'm just longing to get my sea-legs on again." But the pretty color in mamma's face went away, and all she could say was: "O Ted, what *shall* I do without you?" and there was a queer little catch in her voice that just made a big lump fly into my throat.

Then papa began to laugh—I fancy he didn't truly feel like laughing, but just did it to make us feel better. "What a dismal face!" he said, pretending to be very much surprised. "Why, anybody'd think I was going away for three whole years, at least. Eighteen months will soon slip away—I'll be home before you know it And then the honor of being chosen to command one of ' Uncle Sam's ' finest new warships! You ought to feel proud, my dear. I'll send you great budgets of letters from every port we touch at, and Phil (that's me) shall take care of you while I am away. You know he's a big fellow, now, mamma, nine—' going on ten ' (papa always makes fun of me because I say that, but it's really true—just as soon as anybody has a birthday and it's over he's going on to the other birthday—see ?), and this will be a chance for him to show us what sort of stuff he's made of. Come, cheer up, little wife. ' Taking the years together, my dear, there isn't more rain than shine '—though you look as if you thought so just now." Then, before anybody could say a word, he sat down and pulled mamma and me into his lap, and kissed and teased us, and rubbed his soft black beard all over our faces and in our necks until I fairly roared with laughter, and even mamma had to smile.

Well, after that things just went in a whirl for a little time—there was so much happening

—visitors coming to tell papa how sorry they were that he was going away—everybody loves my papa, and they're proud of him, too, for he's *very* brave, and he's lived here all his life —when he's been on shore, I mean; and grandpa lived here, too, all *his* life, and uncle Philip—the one I was named after—all his life. Mamma says I am like uncle Philip in some of my ways, but papa always raises his eyebrows 'way up in the air when she says that. I'm afraid he doesn't think I'm at all like uncle Phil, for he was very brave, and I'm not brave at all, though I try to be, and I'm going to try still harder. You see, there are so many things that make one nervous—that's what aunt Amy says I am. I'm not fond of swinging or climbing—I get dizzy right away—nor of playing in a boat, or most of the things that boys like. I think horses and dogs are lovely, but when the horses kick out their legs suddenly, or lift up their upper lip so that you see their big white teeth, and when dogs jump out on one and bark as if they were very angry and wanted to tear one to pieces, then I just *have* to run away where they can't reach me. And I just *dread* toy pistols and cannon. It does seem strange I should be like this when my papa's not afraid of anything. I feel *so* ashamed sometimes, when I see how disappointed he is about me.

Now Harry Osborne, that lives near us, is just the kind of boy I ought to be as papa's son—he isn't afraid of anything. I told papa that once—it was last Fourth of July night, when he wanted me to send off some fireworks. I enjoyed seeing them from the piazza where I was with mamma, but when papa called me down to touch off some immense fire-crackers I just couldn't do it. I tried—nobody but mamma knows how hard I tried, but I *couldn't* have held those things and had them go off in my hand with a bang, like the other boys did, and of course I had to tell papa that. Oh, how angry he was! he sent me to bed. I felt awfully ashamed—not really so much because of the punishment, though I saw Harry and the other boys laughing, as because I knew papa was so dreadfully disappointed in me. You see, it wouldn't matter so much if he had lots of other boys, but I'm his only child.

I felt *dreadfully,* and I told him so when we talked it over together the next morning. It was then I said that Harry ought to have been his little boy instead of me. And what do you think he said? He just put his arms 'round me, and hugged me so tight my nose was all smashed up against his coat, and he said: "*No, sir!* I prefer my own little son—even if he is a nervous little crank." Didn't I feel glad, though!

But, dear me, all this time I haven't finished telling you about what happened after papa's orders came from the Navy Department; but then, you see, I had to put this part in, too, so you'd understand the kind of boy I am. I never like to pretend—in real earnest, I mean—'cause mamma says it isn't honest, and besides, people might depend on one to do things that one really couldn't do—see? Well, to go back, while papa was talking to all the people that came to see him, and going up to Philadelphia to attend to things there, mamma was getting his clothes ready, and fixing and mending and packing—I think she just *loves* to do things for papa—and I was helping her. I ran in and out, and up and down stairs on errands for her. I like to help mamma; somehow, I can always do the things she asks me to. I guess that's 'cause they're easy; and though lots of people offered to help her, she just wanted me this time. You see, we understand each other. When I get "nervous" and can't do brave things she says she knows just how I feel, and when—even while she was saying something quite funny—tears would run down her face and fall into the trunk she was packing for papa, I just felt she'd rather I wouldn't notice, so I'd look out of the window or pretend I was folding up something for her, so she needn't speak of it. I don't think that sort of pretending is wrong, do you? at least, it doesn't seem so to me. I would do anything for mamma. Of course I think fathers are splendid, and I know my brave, handsome papa is more splendid than any other father in the whole world—I just love him *dearly*—but I do think mothers are so comforting. They know just what to say and do when a person is in trouble, or when their feelings get hurt.

Well, at last everything was ready, and we started off for New York City. While we were there mamma and I went on board the *Delaware* every morning, and stayed all day, so as to be with papa as much as possible.

I wish you could have seen the *Delaware.* I'm not very fond of being on a vessel, as I've told you, but she was certainly very interesting. She is a war-cruiser, you know, and as she belongs to the White Squadron she's painted white; and her guns shine just like silver and gold, though they are really only brass and steel. In the mornings, the first thing papa had to put on his "full-dress" suit of clothes—it has gold lace on the trousers; and gold and red stripes, and a lovely gold eagle on the sleeves of the coat—and his sword which looks like gold and clanks as he walks, and his cocked-hat with the feathers, and go to call on the admiral. I thought he looked splendid! and I know mamma thought so, too; but he said it was "a nuisance," and that he preferred his "fatigue" suit. I looked for that word in the dictionary, and it means "tired"; now, isn't it queer to call a suit of clothes "tired"? I must ask mamma about it some day.

One of the sailors—his name was Jim—took me all over the *Delaware*. I went everywhere—aft, where papa's rooms were—first a queer-shaped room at the end of the vessel, with a locker (that's a high seat like a bench, that has a cushion on it, but the top lifts up to put things in) that ran against what would be the wall if it were a house instead of a ship. And in here were two big cannon, right close to the port-holes, and there was a place near them, in the side of the ship, which could be opened to fire them through in case of a battle. Next to this was another room, where we used to take dinner with papa. And beyond this was his sleeping-room. His bed was fastened to the wall and had a railing round it, just like my old crib in the garret at home, and underneath this bed were great big wide drawers, where mamma spread out all papa's best clothes so they shouldn't get messed. Then alongside of this was his office, where he and his secretary sat to write.

All this was aft; then at the other end—Jim said it was "for'ard"—was a high deck; you had to get up to it by dreadfully steep steps, and here were more cannon, big fellows, "fifteen-inchers," Jim called them, that could throw a ball four miles. Jim seemed to think this was very wonderful. And up here was the "fighting-tower," a queer round place, where papa would go to peep out of the tiniest little crack if the *Delaware* should be in a fight—which I hope she won't. Then downstairs—"amidships"—Jim told me all the names, so I could tell the boys when I got home—were lots of long shallow boxes hanging from the roof by chains, and in these the sailors slept. Oh!

there were lots and *lots* of sailors, and they were so polite to papa, they put their hands to their caps whenever he spoke to them, and sometimes even when he passed. I even went in the kitchen, and Jim introduced me to the cook and the steward, who were both Chinese.

Oh! and there were a cat and a goat on board. The cat was very nice and friendly, but the goat had quite long horns, and he did not look at all pleasant. When the orderly pulled him over by the horns for me to pat, he just put his little front hoofs together and stiffened his legs and looked so cross as he slid along that I said, as quickly as I could: "*Please* don't make him come, orderly; I *really* don't want to pat him." The orderly says the sailors are very fond of this goat; they call it their mascot, and like to think that it brings them good luck.

Of course the time just flew, until the very last day came. That last evening papa said: "Come up on the poop deck, Phil; mother is going to write a note, and I want to have a little talk with you." So up we went. The poop deck was right over papa's rooms, and up there was a long brass cannon that Jim called "the baby," and other big steel guns. These were all covered up now, for the night, and a sailor was "on watch," walking up and down all the time.

Papa and I walked up and down, too, for a while. He was smoking, and he held one of my hands real tight, but he didn't begin to speak right away. Indeed, I began to think he had forgotten, and that mamma would be all through her letter and be waiting for us. I had counted the steps we took before we turned each way, and watched the red and blue and white electric lights on the New York side lots of times before he said anything. Then when we were farthest away from the watch he said, suddenly: "Why, son, why don't you say something? We haven't much more time to talk together in." And, before I could answer, he sat down on a seat, a sort of box—perhaps it was another locker—that was near the skylight, and began to talk.

It was the most serious talk we have ever had; papa didn't make a single joke or tease one bit, he just spoke to me as if I were a grown-up man, like he would to uncle Corbin; and though I don't think many big people know it, little boys just love to be talked to that way—at least, little boys like me. He told me that he left mamma in my charge, that I was to remember she was not strong, and to take great care of her; and always to think of her before myself. And that I *must* try to be brave, so that if any danger came to her I could defend her. He spoke *very* seriously about this. A horrid old lump came in my throat, and I was *so* afraid the tears would come, too—papa does hate to see a boy cry—that I kept swallowing and swallowing all the time. He said that if I did not overcome this foolish nervousness I would get to be a regular coward by and by, and no one would be able to depend on me or respect me at all. "Now, Phil," he said, at the last, "I want you to make this a matter of honor between us. I want you to promise me that while I am gone you'll try every day to overcome some one of those foolish nervous fears that you have—it may be dread of the dark, or of strange noises, or of thunder-storms, or of animals—or anything else that frightens you—you know your weak points as well as I do. Will you promise?"

I didn't answer right away—I couldn't. You see, I knew if I promised I'd just *have* to keep my word, and I knew, too, better than papa did, how *awfully* hard that would be. I had almost made up my mind to tell papa that I really couldn't promise, when he said, very suddenly, and in oh! *such* a voice: "I *cannot* endure that my only child should grow up a coward! I can't tell you how it grieves me! Philip, dear little son, won't you make me this promise before I go away?"

There was something in papa's voice that just made my heart swell right up as if it would almost burst; I didn't seem to be afraid of a single thing. I really think I could have touched off every cannon on that deck if he had asked me then. "Papa," I said out loud —I am afraid the watch must have heard me —"I *do* promise. I will try every single day." Then papa said, "Honor bright?" and I said, "Honor bright," and we shook hands—that's a way papa and I have when we make a bargain with each other. And then he kissed me two or three times, and we went downstairs to mamma.

The next morning the *Delaware* steamed away from New York, and after that mamma and I went home.

Of course, after my talk with papa I had to try every day to keep my promise, and it was really *very* hard sometimes. There were so many things that I didn't like—that I was nervous about, you know, that, though mamma said she did think I was improving, I used to get very discouraged, until she and I had a little talk about it. It was at bedtime; I had just said my verse: "For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Mamma always explains my verses to me, and she said she thought this one was to remind us that we could always tell every single thing that troubled us to Jesus; because He had been a real man once, living right on earth, and though He had never done anything wrong Himself, still He had had lots of trials and temptations, same as we have, so He would always understand just how hard it was for us to be good, and would help us to do what was right every time. Then mamma said: " Why don't you ask Him to help you to be brave, Phil? I'm sure He will. You know He was once a little boy, and He'll understand just how you feel."

I *was* surprised for a minute! You see I'd never thought about Him that way. " Why, mamma," I said, quickly, " do you s'pose He was ever afraid of things like I am? I always thought He was *very* brave."

" So He was, dear," mamma answered, " the bravest man the world has ever known; but all the same He will understand, better than any one else could, just how nervous you get when you have to do certain things; and if you remember to ask Him to help you every day, I am sure He will. He may not take away your timidity, but He will give you courage to do the hard things in spite of it; and to my mind, son, that is a very noble sort of bravery."

I thought it all over after mamma had gone downstairs again, and I just made up my mind I'd do as she said before I went to sleep that night. I would rather not tell you what I said—you know there are some things one doesn't like to speak of—and anyway, mamma says it's the heart that God notices, more than the words, so it won't matter if I don't tell you just the words I used. Sure enough, after that things did go better, and mamma and I felt so glad about it, for we both noticed that whenever I wasn't afraid or nervous one time I seemed to be braver the next time. Mamma says it was a preparation for what was coming—but there, I mustn't tell you too soon.

Well, one afternoon some weeks after papa went away—I don't remember how many, but it seemed a long while—uncle Corbin came to see mamma; they had a long talk together, and after he had gone mamma told me we were going to England! You can imagine how surprised I was. She said we were to visit cousin Richard Fortescue and remain at his home until papa's ship came to England, then we were to come home with him in the *Delaware!* He had special permission to bring us back with him. Of course then things went in another whirl, and really, almost before we knew it the trunks were packed, the house was all closed up, and we were on board the steamer on our way to Liverpool.

I'm sorry I can't tell you about the steamer and our voyage over, but it would take too long; and besides, there really isn't much to tell, 'cause both mamma and I were sick 'most all the way—at least, I was first, and mamma stayed with me; then, when I got better she got worse, and I stayed with her. Cousin

Richard came to Liverpool to meet us—he is a great big man with red cheeks, and such a big loud voice way down in his throat—and he took us to Coombe Abbey, where he and cousin Letty and the children live.

I just wish you could see Coombe Abbey—I'm sure you'd think 'twas lovely. The house is gray, and has ivy growing 'way up over the bedroom windows, and there's a tall tower at one end, where you can get a splendid view for miles 'round. Then there's a great wide stone piazza—only here they call it a "terrace"—with very wide steps up to it; and here, walking up and down all the time, are two peacocks—like those you see in Central Park—with the most *beautiful* tails you could imagine. They screech dreadfully sometimes—I didn't quite like them at first, though now I'm not a bit afraid. Then in the grounds there's a sun-dial—an old stone all covered with moss, and the people that lived here long ago used to tell the time by the shadows it made as the sun fell on it. There's a lake, too, in the grounds, where we go to fish, and a tiny bridge over a little stream, and an arbor, and funny shaped beds full of lovely flowers, and lots of trees.

Mamma says it's beautiful, and she and I love to sit and walk there; but the boys, Dick and Cyril, like the part better that's back of the house, where the dogs and horses are. You see they both ride splendidly, and they're just crazy to grow up and go fox-hunting. I guess they thought 'twas queer I didn't want to ride all their horses and play with all their dogs; and though I did get on Dick's horse, "Rajah," every day, and ride up and down the avenue, 'cause mamma said papa'd want me to, I didn't really care for it; and I'm pretty sure they knew it, though I wish they didn't—you see it wasn't very pleasant to have them look at each other and laugh when Rajah wouldn't turn 'round—though I stuck to it till he did—and to hear Dick tell Cyril that I was "the oddest little duffer" he'd ever met. I'm not sure what "duffer" means, but I don't believe it's anything very nice.

Anyway, I do think English people use such funny words. Cousin Richard and the boys laugh at me because I say "I guess," and talk about "having a real good time"; but I don't think those expressions sound half as queer as some of the things they say—like "he took a header," or "he got a cropper," when a person gets a fall; and only the other morning cousin Richard called dear little Dusgate—who is only three years old and the *sweetest* little creature—"a droll little beggar"! *I* wouldn't want my papa to call me that. Of course, I don't tell them about these things, because we're visiting them, you know, and mamma says it wouldn't be polite; and anyway, things are different now—I mean the boys act different to me now on account of something that happened. To explain this I must tell you about the house.

It's the queerest house you ever were in.

You come on little flights of steps just where you don't expect them, leading up or down to the funniest shaped rooms, and there's a great long gallery that has pictures on the walls and suits of armor hanging up and standing about here and there. This hall gets dark very early in the afternoons, so I like best to play at the end where sir Alan's (cousin Dick's very oldest relation) picture hangs; his armor is there also, and there's a window, too, a tall window with lots of little round panes of glass in it. This window is open most times, and then the ivy and a lovely climbing red rose just poke their heads in, and it's real pretty. We all play here in the afternoons, 'cept when Dick and Cyril go to the stables, and then Evelyn and I have our games alone. I love Evelyn, she's such a nice, pretty little girl; she never makes fun of anything I do, and I don't mind, as the others do, if she does bring her doll, Sweet Lavender, with her—you see, she's the only girl, and I'm sure she must get tired sometimes of having just boys to play with. Well, we were playing here one afternoon—just Evelyn and I—at our favorite end of the hall, when the something I spoke of just now happened.

It had been quite an exciting day, 'cause there was to be a big dinner-party that evening, and things had been preparing since the day before. We children were not to come to the grand dinner—even Dick would be in bed by the time it began—but we had seen lots of the silver and fine things that were to be on the table, and cousin Letty had let us be in the room when she took her diamonds that she was going to wear out of the safe. She took out lots of boxes, one after the other, and showed us the beautiful jewels in them. How they did flash and sparkle! Just as she was doing it Dick came running in and told her that cousin Richard wanted her and mamma in the drawing-room for a few minutes *right away*.

Now when cousin Richard says "right away" he means at that very minute—everybody knows that; so, though cousin Letty said, "Oh dear, how inconvenient!" she began to put the boxes away quickly; but there were a good many, and before she could get them all into the safe Dick came with another message for her. "Well, I'll have to finish putting them away when I come back," cousin Letty said, piling the rest of the cases on the table. "Phil, you keep an eye on them for me in the meanwhile, and don't you let anybody run off with my jewels." You see, she said that to me 'cause she knew Dick and Cyril would be off to the stables just as soon as her back was turned. We all laughed, and I said I would take care of them, so I left the door of the safe-room wide open so I could see the table, and when she and mamma had gone Evelyn and I went on playing.

Cousin Letty and mamma stayed away a long time—we had played ever so many games of hide-and-seek, and the hall was getting quite dark, when all at once I heard Evelyn call out: "Phil, come here, I want to show you something."

I was just going to hide, but I ran over to where she stood. She was holding Sweet

Lavender tight in her arms, and looking at sir Alan's armor with such a queer expression on her dear little face. "Phil," she whispered, when I got up to her, "I didn't know before that sir Alan had eyes in his head. Did you? Look!"

"What, this sir Alan?" I asked, pointing to the figure. "Why, Evvie, what nonsense you are talking! He looks just as he always does," and I laughed. Then I looked again, and what do you think! Sure enough, there were two big, dreadful eyes looking right down at me from under sir Alan's helmet!

In a minute, before I even knew I was going to do it, I just *flew* to the other side of the hall; I was so frightened that I felt as if I *must* get out of that place without stopping for anybody. But Evelyn didn't know I was running away, she thought I was playing, and she laughed out loud—you see, she had forgotten her fright already.

But I didn't feel like laughing, I can tell you, and it was just as much as I could do to make myself stand still for a few minutes and think. My head was all in a whirl at first—all I seemed to want to do was to get to the end of the long hall, behind the heavy baize door—down there I would be safe, for the dining-room was there, and some of the servants would surely be about. Yes, I would be safe, but what would become of Evelyn? The horrible creature in the armor might eat her up or carry her off—and yet if I stayed he might do something dreadful to me, too.

I shook all over with fright, and felt as if I *couldn't* go back for Evvie or anybody else. Then suddenly I remembered the open safe-room door, and cousin Letty's diamonds on the table, and it came to me like a flash that whoever it was that was in sir Alan's armor he was going to steal those jewels if I let him! I can't tell you why I thought so, I just know it came to me and I was sure of it.

Oh, how horribly I felt! I got cold inside so that my teeth began to knock together and gooseflesh came out all over me, but I didn't run away any farther. I remembered cousin Letty's words: "Don't you let anybody run off with my jewels, Phil." And that I had promised. Then I thought of what papa had said: "I *cannot* endure that my only child should grow up a coward," and *then* I began to walk toward Evelyn, though my feet almost stuck to the floor—for I just knew then that I *had* to stay in that gallery and take care of her and keep that man from stealing cousin Letty's diamonds.

I didn't see how I was to do it. I glanced up at the window as I passed—how I would have liked to climb out of it and get away!—and as I looked, what should pop right out into the daylight sky but a dear little star. It twinkled at me in such a friendly way, and it seemed to me it said, just as plain as if it had a voice: "I'm here—don't be afraid, Phil; don't be afraid." Of course it didn't *really* say so, for stars don't talk; but it helped me just as much as if it had, for seeing it up there in the heavens I thought of that verse about our

"High Priest" that mamma and I talked over that night at home, and as I walked over to where the suit of armor was, I began to say to myself—inside like, you know: "*Please*, dear Jesus, help me to be brave! *Please*, dear Jesus, don't let him steal cousin Letty's diamonds!" And do you know—He did help me.

All this takes a long time to tell, but it didn't take very long to do, and Evelyn didn't suspect a thing. "It's getting 'most too dark to play," she said, when I got up to her. "I wish Dennis would come with the lights." Then something—mamma said 'twas in answer to my prayer—told me just what to do. If I could only not let the thief that was in the armor see I knew he was there, and Evelyn and I could stay right close to him as if we were playing, so he couldn't get out and slip into the safe-room, Dennis would soon be along with the lights and would help us, for he is very big and very brave; he was a soldier once, in cousin Richard's regiment.

I was so afraid Evvie would guess and get frightened and cry, and so spoil the whole thing, that I had to play with her—at least, I made believe play, but I was really shaking all over, and when she accidentally struck sir Alan's spear I almost screamed out loud.

I suppose it wasn't really very long before Dennis came—he's always very particular about the time—but it seemed like hours and hours to me. I felt like rushing over and hugging his legs, I *was* so glad to see him, but then I thought I'd better not, for he was still a good way off, and that would leave Evelyn alone; besides, I wasn't sure I *could* run, I was trembling so. So I waited till he was rather near, and had all the candles lighted, then I walked up to him and whispered—at least I meant to whisper, but instead of that he says I fairly screamed, so that cousin Richard heard me in the drawing-room and came rushing in: "There's—a—man—in—sir—Alan's—armor—he's—a—thief—after—cousin—Letty's—diamonds!" Then all at once a horrid rushing noise came in my ears, everything got black, and I don't remember anything more for a while, for I fainted " dead " away—so Dennis says.

Well, when I opened my eyes again I was in mamma's lap up in our room; and the next day she told me that cousin Richard and Dennis had easily caught the thief, who confessed that he had been hanging around all day to try to get something, and in the confusion of getting ready for the dinner-party he had slipped into the gallery without being seen, and got into the armor to hide. He had seen cousin Letty showing the jewelry, and he intended to creep into the safe-room as soon as we went away from that end of the hall, and carry off all he could put his hands on. He told them he didn't dream that I knew he was there, so they caught him easily and took him away.

Cousin Richard made me tell him the whole story. I was ashamed to have to tell how dreadfully frightened I was; but what do you think? When I finished he patted my head, and said, so very gently I hardly knew his big voice: " Why, Phil, my boy, you're a hero—

the real true genuine article! and I'm proud of you!" And mamma just held me tight to her and kissed me, and said over and over: "My brave son! my dear little boy! O Phil, how proud and glad papa will be."

Then in came Dick and Cyril, and you can't think how differently they treated me to what they used to. Dick offered me his new knife right away as a present, and said he just wished he had been there to show what *he* could do. And Cyril asked cousin Richard if he didn't think he ought to let the Queen know, so she could give me a Victoria Cross. At first I thought he was making fun of me—'cause he and Dick just think that V. C. the greatest honor in the world—but they said they were in earnest. But the best of all was a *dear* letter from papa, written all to myself. He says in it that I have kept my promise like a man, and that instead of being the coward he was afraid I might be I am his "honor-bright hero-son." I *love* that letter—I've read it so often it's getting all worn out.

I'm *very*, VERY glad papa thinks what I did was brave; but of course I know I'm not really brave all through and through yet, and so mamma says I'll have to try just the same every day or I might go back—'cause I'm still nervous sometimes. But it's not anything at all like what it was, and that's the reason mamma said I ought to tell you this story. She says she's sure there are other boys in the world as nervous as I used to be, and she thinks it might do them good to know how I was helped.

GRANDMA'S NEW-YEAR PARTY.

THE children had had *such* a good time during the last two weeks. They said they had never enjoyed themselves so much at any Christmas season, and declared that of all places in the world for a holiday, grandma's house was the jolliest. In the first place it was very large, and full of unexpected staircases and landings and halls, leading to quaint-shaped rooms of all sizes, where grandpa and grandma's children and grandchildren and friends were welcome to make as much fun and noise as they pleased, and to enjoy themselves in their own fashion. There were a piano, a violin, and a banjo for those who could play on them, games of all sorts, and books without number, fairy tales, travels, histories, and stories of other boys and girls, interesting enough to please anybody; best of all, however, was the garret, a large open space, lighted by some funny-looking round little windows which the boys called "port-holes."

Here, at the top of the house, the children had good times indeed; here they played "Indians," "Desert Island," "Tug of War," and gymnasium, held receptions, made stump speeches, fired off guns loaded with caps, and shot arrows out of the "port-holes" at imaginary foes in the orchard; the only trouble about this last game being that when the stock of ammunition was exhausted hostilities had to be suspended until one of the company went down on the battle-field and gathered up the scattered weapons of war.

There was apt to be a difference of opinion on the subject of who should go on this errand, but excepting that, it was a favorite game with the boys, while the girls played visiting, or gave dolls' parties, or skipped the rope.

There were ten children, including tall Murray, fresh from his military school, and baby Karl, who was just eleven months old; so, as uncle Rollie said, it was a fortunate thing that they had the garret and the yard in which to work off some of their exuberant spirits, or there would have been no living in the house with them.

Oh! I must tell you about the yard. It was sixty feet deep at the back of the house, while the part which ran along the side of the bustling street was over one hundred feet in depth. The tiny orchard and vegetable garden lay at the back of the house, and the carriage-house, barn, and chicken-house faced the street. Here were kept horses and cows, chickens and turkeys, much to the surprise and interest of the passers-by. It was a miniature farm right in the heart of the city, on a street entirely given up to business purposes, and more than one real-estate agent had suggested grandpa's selling the old place, or building stores on it, and moving up-town to a more fashionable street; but the old gentleman always shook his head. "No," he would say, in his slow, mild way, "I bought this place with my first savings, years and years ago, when this part of New York City was all country. The children have all been born, and some have died, in that old house, and mother and I are content to end our days in it."

But grandma went further than that, and declared she preferred the old farm to the most fashionable part of the city. "I like to be near the stores," said she, "and make acquaintances among the workers in the busy hives. I have a large circle of friends among the little cash-girls and cash-boys in the stores near by, which I would not be willing to give up, and I think they all have a kindly liking for the farm." Well they might, for after her own quantity of milk was taken out, the dear old lady sent the balance regularly to these poor "neighbors," free of charge, an extra allowance being left at the houses where there were little children or sick people; turkeys and chickens, too, and vegetables and fruit in their season, found their way to the same places, and many and sincere were the thanks given in return for these kindnesses.

The first installment of grown people and children arrived early on Christmas Eve, and they had scarcely had time to be kissed all around and to take off their things before Martha, grandma's maid, who had been nurse to a number of the aunts and uncles in days gone by, appeared to announce that "some more of the fam'ly was comin' up the steps." A rush was made for the parlor window nearest the stoop, Russell, Hope, and Nannie squeezing into one corner of the old-fashioned three-paned window, while aunt Nora held Karl up above their heads, so that his pretty blue eyes could see the new-comers.

There they came, along the railing and up the snowy stoop—Douglas ahead, his tam-o'-shanter almost on the back of his neck, intent on being the first to enter; next sweet-faced Elsie, rather sober under the responsibility of looking after so many little ones; close to her came Donald, smiling and waving his hat to the group at the window; then chubby, bright-eyed Helen, Joyce stopping at the railing to kiss her hand to the baby.

Such a kissing and hugging and laughing and talking as ensued when they got in! And in the excess of his joy Douglas squeezed the baby so tight that the little fellow cried out, which brought grandma and all the aunties to the rescue. "I didn't mean to hurt the dear little teeny-weeny thing," protested the offender, half contrite, half provoked. "Babies cry if you look at them," which was a libel on good-natured Karl.

Such mysteries as went on that day and evening! You could scarcely enter a room, or even turn around, but somebody cried out hurriedly, "Oh! do stay out a few minutes longer;" or, "I wish you'd shut your eyes till I get by;" or, "Please don't anybody go into such and such a room." The bell kept ringing and package after package kept coming, of all sizes and shapes, packages which Martha and old John the butler smuggled off into grandma's room as quickly as possible.

By bed-time the children were in such a state of excitement that Donald and Douglas, as well as Hope and Joyce, declared they were sure they would not be able "to sleep a wink"; but they did, soundly, too, until Christmas morning.

It would be useless to attempt to tell you about all the wonderful presents that were given and received in the big back parlor where the stockings had been hung; or of how many times everybody kissed and thanked everybody else; or of the lovely Christmas service in the church near by, where grandpa and his big family filled four pews; or of the Christmas dinner; or of the evening, when everybody danced, even grandpa and grandma being drawn into the Virginia reel, which had to be formed in two sets, because there were so many people to join in it! It was all too nice and jolly and "Christmasy," as Helen called it, to be described.

The days between Christmas and New-Year

passed very swiftly and pleasantly to the young people; picture-galleries, public buildings, and museums came in for a share of their attention, and the days and evenings passed by on golden wings, until New-Year Eve (or, as grandma and grandpa called it, Old-Year Night) came around. A whisper had gone abroad, how started no one could tell, that grandma intended giving a New-Year party, though the children had heard of no invitations being issued; and when on Wednesday morning at breakfast the old lady said, "Children, I should like to see you all in my room in half an hour; I want to tell you of something which I have planned for to-morrow evening," a delighted smile flashed around the tableful of children. Each one looked at the other and nodded, as much as to say, "Didn't I tell you so!" while Donald waved his napkin over his head with "Hurrah for grandma!" a cry which the children, the uncles, aunties, and grandpa himself joined in, until the room fairly rang.

"Oh, hush, you foolish people!" cried grandma, smiling and blushing all over her still pretty face, "or you'll bring a mob about the house."

Before the half-hour was up, the children were all in grandma's room. Uncle Rollie was there, too; he was the youngest of the uncles, hardly more than an overgrown boy, and a great favorite with every one. The children grouped themselves about the old lady with an air of expectancy.

"Children," began grandma, "I intend giving a New-Year party."

"A-a-h!" breathed her delighted audience.

"The guests will be strangers to you all," continued the old lady, "and I must ask your kindly help and courtesy in entertaining them. They are little cash-girls and cash-boys, who are employed in stores on this street and on the avenue near by. They are honest, hard-working children who seldom have a holiday, and never such good times as you have had the past week. God has been very good to us all, and while the joyfulness of the Christ Child's birthday is still with us, I thought we would pass along to these brave little workers some of the 'jolly times' as well as the 'good will,' of which we may have more than our share. Will you help my New-Year party to go off well, girls and boys?"

There was a moment of surprised silence; this was not what they had expected; then, before anybody could speak, uncle Rollie left his chair by the window, and going swiftly to grandma's side took her hand, and kissed it. "I'll be glad to help you, mother," he said, and Hope told Nannie afterward that she knew there were tears in his eyes.

"I'll help you, too, grandma," cried Murray, standing very straight and tall before the old lady.

"And I," cried Elsie.

"An' I too, gramma," put in Russell.

"And I! and I! and I!" cried a chorus of voices, and as grandma unfolded her plan their interest grew as deep as even she could have desired.

At four o'clock on New-Year afternoon the little guests began to arrive at the big house, in twos and threes, painfully shy at first; but uncle Rollie and Elsie answered the bell themselves, greeting the little people with kindly speeches, while aunt Nora, Helen, and Donald had such pleasant, funny things to say while hats and hoods and caps were being taken off, that it only needed grandma's bright smile of welcome to set the new-comers quite at their ease.

Grandma's children and grandchildren were always very much in earnest over whatever they undertook to do, and none the less so on this occasion; so the big parlors soon echoed and reëchoed with shouts of merriment and laughter. They danced—those that could; they played all sorts of games, even "Oats, Peas, Beans," which grandpa started as "the farmer," taking in grandma as "the farmer's wife," and they "clapped their hands and stamped their feet" after the most approved fashion, amid peals of laughter from everybody.

About half-past six o'clock aunt Kate played the "Wedding March," and grandpa led off the procession with a small, bright-eyed little cash-girl of twelve years, grandma followed on the arm of a delicate boy of about the same age, the children of the house each offering an arm to a boy or girl visitor until all were in line, Murray and uncle Rollie being last with the smallest partners they could find, which increased the fun and laughter. Round and round they went, keeping time with the music, then through the hall to the dining-room at the back of the house.

I wish you could have seen the tableful of good things which grandma had provided for her little "children of the poor." Such roast beef and lamb! such richly browned turkeys and chickens! such rosy ham! such celery and cranberry sauce! such delicious home-made bread! The children ate as if they thoroughly enjoyed every mouthful—as very likely they did—and grandma whispered to grandpa, "It is really beautiful to see the way those grand-

"On a raised platform at the end of the back parlor stood a fat, rosy Santa Claus."

(Grandma's New Year Party.)

children of ours are waiting upon their little guests; I feel proud of them."

After the solids came oranges, jellies, wholesome cake, apples, nuts, raisins, and favors, which last created much fun among the children. Another procession was formed, and all marched back to the parlors, where a surprise awaited them. On a raised platform at the end of the back parlor stood a fat, rosy Santa Claus, whose eyes twinkled, and whose generous-sized mouth laughed over his long snowy beard in a fashion that was infectious. Santa Claus carried an immense pack on his back, which appeared to be well stuffed. A table back of him was also piled up with things, which were half concealed under a cover. Near Santa stood a youth about fifteen, whose erect bearing reminded one of Murray. He was enveloped in a loose white robe, gracefully drawn up on one shoulder; he wore a little white mask, and on his head was a low crown, on the front of which were the words "New-Year."

As soon as the children were in order, Santa

Claus made a speech; he said he was sorry to have come after Christmas, which was his special season, but he hoped that the young people were glad to see him, nevertheless. He had traveled some distance since morning, and at his time of life a journey was a journey, even with fast reindeer and a comfortable sleigh, so on that account, as well as out of compliment to the New-Year, on whose time he had encroached, he would ask that young gentleman to hand out a few parcels which might be of interest to some of the young people present. Then he untied his pack, and you never saw such a lot of packages and queer-shaped bundles as it contained! Santa gave the packages to the graceful New-Year, who read off the names written on them, and then handed them to the little boy and girl visitors as they approached.

One could scarcely hear for the babel of eager voices which filled the rooms. For once the small business men and women had forgotten the stern realities of life, which had crushed so much of the buoyancy of childhood out of them, and were as happy as children could be over the toys, games, books, and candy, to say nothing of the innumerable useful presents which Santa Claus had so freely bestowed by the hands of young New-Year. Overcoats, warm flannels, dresses, capes, hats, caps, shoes—it would be impossible to tell you of all, but I know this, Santa Claus was so tired by the time the presents were all distributed, that after singing a funny little good-night verse he was glad to accept New-Year's arm, limping off the stage with an exaggeration of lameness that vastly amused his audience.

While the little folks were getting cooled off, grandpa told them a story about New York City as it was in his young days. By the time the story was ended the new possessions which Santa Claus had brought had been made up into bundles and packages by the older folks, then hats and cloaks were donned, and after thanking their kind entertainers for the "good time" they had had, the little cash-girls and cash-boys went home to relate the wonderful events of the evening, and to cheer the hearts of tired, dispirited mothers and fathers with the sight of the warm, comfortable clothing which had been given them, lifting a weight of care and anxiety off more than one overburdened heart.

So grandma's party accomplished two ends: it gave these poor children a bright spot in their lives to look back on, and it touched the hearts of the parents as well. As to the grandchildren —Donald voiced the sentiments of all when he declared: "Well! I enjoyed Christmas Day 'mensely, but I do think grandma's New-Year party went ahead of anything we've had before, and I hope she'll have another one next year."

VERA.

THE children were all at grandma's for the holidays. They always enjoyed visiting her, she was so "altogether jolly," as Donald expressed it. Grandpa was very quiet, but so indulgent in the way of tips and treats that he was also very popular with the young folks. The roomy old house was another attraction—such a splendid garret as it possessed, in which grandpa had had a new finely equipped gymnasium put up for the boys, and grandma a well-furnished dolls'-house for the girls.

Some of my boy and girl readers have heard of this old house before, and may remember that, though it was situated in a street that was fast being given up to business purposes, and where every foot of ground was worth a fabulous price, neither grandpa nor grandma would hear of selling it and moving into more fashionable quarters. The grounds which were attached to the house were large enough to contain an orchard and vegetable garden and carriage-house, stable, chicken-house, and barn, and on this miniature farm in the heart of the city grandpa and grandma kept their horses, cows, chickens, and turkeys, using their good things freely and wisely, for the benefit of their poorer neighbors as well as their own comfort. Some of you may remember that a New-Year party was given in this old house a year or two ago, where the guests were the poor little cash-boys and cash-girls that work in the crowded stores on the business avenue and streets near by, and the entertainers grandpa and grandma and their grandchildren.

There were twelve grandchildren now instead of ten—baby Felix, who had taken Karl's place as the youngest in the family, and Vera Warwick, a little ten-year-old English girl. Vera was the only child of grandma's youngest daughter, aunt Hope, who had married an Englishman and gone to live in England some years before. Aunt Hope had died when Vera was only two years old, and her papa, who was a member of Parliament, or, as Vera put it, "an M. P.," was kept too busy to be able to spare time to bring her to America. But uncle Rollie, on his last visit to England, had persuaded Mr. Warwick to let him take the little girl back with him to visit her grandparents, and that is how she came to be at the "mansion" (as the old house was called among the family) this holiday time, as eager to meet her little new relatives as they were to make her acquaintance.

In appearance Vera was a typical English child—very fair, with wavy, golden hair, a pink-and-white complexion, and clear, dark-blue eyes that could sparkle and dance with fun. Her beauty, her pretty accent, and her friendliness won the hearts of Hope and Nannie and Helen and Joyce at once, and when the boys found that the newcomer had brought with her three fine English dogs, which she could put through "no end of tricks," and that she knew some splendid boys' games which were new to them, they, too, thought that she was an acquisition to the holiday party. And so she was; her keen appreciation of fun, her high spirits and fearlessness making her an acceptable comrade in any play. But there were times when the little girl allowed these qualities to carry her too far, and to make her self-willed and inconsiderate of other people's feelings and rights.

Mr. Warwick had mentioned this failing of his little daughter's in his letter to grandma, attributing it to the fact that Vera's constant playmates for several years had been five English boy cousins who were, he wrote, "as headlong and thoughtless and inconsiderate as boys are generally." Now grandma's experience had been that associating with boys did not necessarily make a girl thoughtless and unmindful of other people's feelings, and she fancied the matter had never been put before Vera in the manner that would impress her most. The dear old lady felt very tender toward this motherless little granddaughter, and watched for every opportunity to be helpful to her.

Christmas Day had come and passed with even more than the usual joy and festivity. The little English girl declared she had never enjoyed anything so much in all her life. The excited expectancy of Christmas Eve; the delightful realization of Christmas morning, when the stockings were emptied and everybody got just what they wanted; the walk to church over the crisp white snow, the beautiful service and the sweet carols, in which every one joined with such fervor; the merry Christmas dinner, when there were so many good things to eat that one hardly knew which to give one's best energies to; the reception in the afternoon for grandma's "little children of the poor," when each guest received a substantial gift to take home; and the tree and dance in the evening! The good times had lasted all through the week, and now New-Year Day had come.

Grandpa and grandma believed in keeping the day in the fashion which had prevailed when they were young—with "open house" and a warm greeting for all that should call upon them. So grandma and her daughters and daughters-in-law entertained visitors in the big parlor, while grandpa sallied forth, in his dress-suit and shining silk hat, card-case in his pocket and gold-headed cane in hand, to call on those of his friends who still kept up the old-fashioned New-Year custom.

Some of the uncles went, too, and Murray, who began to consider himself quite grown up. Even the boys became infected with the idea. After calling several times on grandma, and then separately on every one of their female relatives, and being treated liberally on each occasion to lemonade, chocolate, and all the other good things which formed the refreshments, they made out a list of the little girls they knew in the city and went off to call upon them.

After they had gone the five little girls hung about the parlor, not knowing quite what to do with themselves. Grandma and the mammas and aunties were entertaining some visitors in whom the children had no interest, and Elsie was curled up before the library fire, too deeply engrossed in a book to be willing to spare the time to suggest a play to them.

"I do think it was downright mean of those boys to go off and leave us," protested Joyce, crossly, kicking up the edge of the tiger-skin rug which lay before the library fire. "I don't see why they couldn't have kept on calling on us all the afternoon. Wasn't it fun having them do it?"

"Yes," said Vera, absently; she stood by the window, which overlooked the grounds. Suddenly she clapped her hands softly. "O girls!" she cried, eagerly, "I've got a splendid idea! *Such* fun!" Then she added, with quick decision: "Nannie, you're to come with me to help. Hope, you and Joyce and Helen stay here until we come back—we won't be very long."

Outside the library door Vera whispered her plan to Nannie: "I thought we'd dress the dogs up and take them to call on the girls!"

"O Vera, that will be too good for anything!" exclaimed fun-loving Nannie. "You do think of the splendidest plays. I know the girls will just roar with laughter."

Running swiftly down the walk to the barn, the children let out the three English dogs. They came with a rush, frisking and barking, delighted to be free. Sir Reginald was a big, long-eared, sad-eyed hound, whose dignified appearance was often contradicted by his boisterous behavior. Tony and Squibs were smaller animals, slight of build, nervous and active, and with such intelligent little faces as to warrant Vera's assertion that they understood every word that was said to them. With some difficulty, and much suppressed laughter, the dogs were smuggled up the back stairs and into the garret.

"Now you make them stay up here, Nannie," said Vera, "and I'll run downstairs and get some clothes to put on them."

" Outside the library door Vera whispered her plan to Nannie."

(Vera.)

"Hadn't I better go?" asked Nannie, hesitatingly. "I know where to find some old things."

"No, I'll find them; I know," was the decided reply, and off ran Vera. In a few minutes she returned with several articles of dress thrown over her arm. "Here's a piece of lace and a ribbon and a *jabot* for you," she said, handing them to her cousin. "Now you dress Tony and Squibs, and I'll take Sir Reginald."

"But what have you got for Sir Reginald?" asked Nannie. "I don't want to take everything."

"Oh, I'll have enough," Vera answered, evasively. "I'll take Sir Reginald, and you can put the dogs up on that ledge, Nannie, to dress them, and don't let's look at each other's work until we are all finished."

"All right," Nannie agreed. They turned their backs on each other, and silence reigned for a short space of time. As soon as Vera saw that her cousin's attention was diverted, she ran down the garret steps, returning in a minute or two with a bundle. Out of this she took a short circular cloak made of velvet, which she put around the neck of the big hound, fastening it at the back. Around his neck she tied a soft muslin-and-lace scarf, and on his head she set one of her grandmother's morning-caps. Then Vera paused and surveyed her work with flushed cheeks and dancing eyes.

"That cloak wants something on the bottom to finish it off," she said to herself. Nannie was having a difficulty in getting Tony to submit to some of his finery. "Behave yourself this minute, Tony!" said Vera, severely, but without looking at him; then, confident that Nannie's attention was engaged, she slipped downstairs again, soon returning with a roll of lace and a needle which held a very long thread; behind her stalked Boojum, grandma's big cat. With a warning shake of her finger, which Sir Reginald received in dignified silence, Vera proceeded to baste the lace on the edge of the velvet cloak. There was more than enough to go around, and catching up a pair of scissors which lay conveniently near, Vera snipped off a piece of the rare old lace!

At this instant, having completed Tony's costume and utterly failed in persuading Squibs to be adorned, Nannie turned to speak to Vera, forgetting her agreement. "O Vera, he does look *too* funny for anything!" she exclaimed, with uplifted hands, as her eyes fell upon Sir Reginald's figure.

The big dog certainly presented a very comical appearance. He sat upright, as sober as a judge, enveloped in the lace-bedecked velvet cloak, his eyes looking more melancholy than ever from under the ruffle of grandma's cap, the corners of his heavy mouth hanging dismally down.

"Oh, how the girls will laugh to see such a funny-looking caller come walking in! *Do* look at Tony, Vera; he doesn't know what to make of Sir Reginald."

Tony wore a large lace ruffle around his neck, with a *jabot*, which lay gracefully along his back; his tail was tied with a gay-colored ribbon, and Nannie had arranged a handkerchief between his ears to look like a dainty breakfast-cap. The little dog gazed at Sir Reginald with an expression of mild astonishment that was very amusing. A little distance from him sat Squibs, his head on one side, surveying Tony with a severe disgust that seemed to say, " No such nonsense for me." In a chair on the other side of the big dog sat Boojum, a deeply interested spectator.

The little girls laughed until the tears came to their eyes, then Nannie began to examine Sir Reginald's attire. " Why, Vera, this is grandma's new velvet cloak!" she exclaimed, in a tone of dismay. " How *could* you take that! I'm sure she won't like it; suppose Sir Reginald should tear it. I *don't* think you ought to have taken it; there were plenty of other things. And you've cut her lace! Oh *dear*, I hope she won't be angry."

" What a fusser you are!" cried Vera, impatiently. " Nothing's going to happen to the cloak, and I'm sure Reggie looks funnier in that than he would in a shawl, and he couldn't wear a jacket with sleeves—don't you see? I had to take the cloak. Besides, I met grandma in the hall——"

"Did she say you might take it?" broke in Nannie, eagerly.

"I suppose you'd feel better if I said she did," Vera answered, evasively; "so I say, 'She did.'"

"Oh, that's all right then!" Nannie's honest little face brightened up. "I do think she's the very kindest grandma that ever lived, don't you?"

"Now let's finish Squibs," said Vera, quickly, ignoring the question. "Then we'll take them downstairs and have some fun. You'll see if grandma doesn't laugh as much as anybody."

Much against his will, a ruffle was tied around poor Squibs's neck, and a broad sash about his body, then the procession started for the library. Nannie went first with a struggling little dog under each arm, and Vera followed with Sir

Reginald, making him walk down the steps on his hind legs. Boojum brought up the rear: he was evidently interested in the result of this, to him, most extraordinary performance.

The party reached the first floor in safety, and throwing open the library door with a flourish, Vera announced, with as close an imitation of the old butler's pompous manner as she could command: "Sir Reginald Warwick, and the Masters Squibs and Tony Warwick!"

The boys had returned home, and as all eyes turned on the three ridiculous figures inside the doorway, a shout of merriment filled the room.

"Delighted to meet you, gentlemen," cried Russell, springing to his feet and making a low bow to Sir Reginald. Taking this as a signal for a romp, Sir Reginald made just as low an obeisance in return, with a deep "bow-wow!" and started off at a headlong pace around the room, instantly followed by Squibs and Tony.

Round and round they tore, barking and

snarling, their bodies at such an angle that at times their sides almost touched the floor; efforts to stop them only increased their speed. At last Sir Reginald darted through the portières which divided the library from the parlors, closely pursued by the smaller dogs. A violent crash of china was heard, and some shrieks and yelps, then a man's voice speaking very sternly.

The children stood as if paralyzed, then Douglas broke the dreadful silence. "Phew!" he whistled, "that's grandpa's voice. Don't I feel sorry for the fellow that got up this circus!" That broke the spell, and with one accord the children rushed into the parlor. Vera shivered with dismay when she saw the mischief the dogs had wrought, and Nannie began to cry. Chairs were overturned, and the large vase which stood by the mantelpiece was broken. The little table which held grandma's most precious pieces of old china was overturned, and the heirlooms lay in fragments on the floor. The velvet cloak which Sir Reginald had worn was soiled and torn, and the valuable lace that Vera had so recklessly cut and basted on it was in tatters! Grandma sat in a chair looking pale and grieved; crowded about her were the mammas and aunties and some visitors; grandpa and John the butler had hold of the dogs.

A few questions from grandpa in a stern voice, very unlike his usual mild one, brought out the whole story, and both culprits were ordered to their rooms. Before she left, Nannie threw her arms about her grandmother, with a tearful entreaty to be forgiven, but Vera tossed her head and marched out of the parlor without a word or sign of contrition. Up in her room, however, the little girl did not feel at all comfortable. It was in vain she tried to make herself believe that she was being treated worse than she deserved. She knew that she had planned and carried out the mischief, and that poor Nannie had been but a tool in her hands. How else was she to be punished? Would grandma and grandpa send her back to

England in disgrace? How very stern grandpa's usually kind face had looked; but grandma was sorry—Vera felt sure of that. Just then the door opened, and grandma came into the room and sat down on the lounge where the little girl had thrown herself. She put an arm around Vera's shoulders and drew her to her. "Have you nothing to say to me, Vera?" she asked, in her sweet, kind old voice.

And then, quite unexpectedly, a big lump came into Vera's throat, and she burst into tears!

Grandma said nothing, only kept on smoothing the soft, flowing hair.

"O grandma," said Vera, presently, "I *am* sorry, indeed I am! I only did it to have some fun. I didn't think Sir Reginald would behave so badly."

"Has he never acted in this manner before?" asked grandma.

"Well—yes—a few times," acknowledged Vera, reluctantly.

"That shows that you did not think about that part of the matter at all," said grandma.

"You simply wanted to have some fun and did not trouble yourself as to who might suffer by it. I am afraid that my little granddaughter has got into the bad habit of putting her own pleasure first, instead of making other people's pleasure her first consideration. My darling, your dear mamma was one of the most unselfish natures that God ever made—don't you want to be like her?"

"Of course I do, grandma," sobbed Vera. "But it is so hard to remember; and then I wouldn't have a bit of fun."

"Oh, yes, you would," said grandma, "and a nicer kind, too—a kind that would leave pleasant remembrances instead of vain regrets. It would be hard only at first until you became used to thinking more of some one else's pleasure and interest than your own. Will you try while you are with me, Vera?"

Vera hesitated. "What's the use of promising?" she said, presently. "I know I'll forget."

"You won't forget if you ask God to help you remember." Grandma stroked the little hand that lay on her lap, as she spoke, then she added, quietly: "What is your name, grandchild?"

Vera stared at her. "Why, grandma, you know—Vera Honor Warwick."

"You have a beautiful name," said grandma, slowly. The little girl looked pleased.

"*I* think Vera is a pretty name," she said. "I think I've heard it is a Russian name; anyway, it's very uncommon."

"Every name has a meaning, and that of Vera is truth," continued grandma; "so your name means truth and honor. What a beautiful character you ought to have to match your name!"

"Oh," said Vera, a little uncomfortably.

The kind old voice went on: "Suppose I named a black cat 'Snowball': wouldn't you think the name very much misapplied? Or suppose your merry little cousin Hope was a dismal, unhappy sort of child: wouldn't you say her name was very inappropriate?"

"Yes," whispered Vera, reluctantly; she began to see her grandmother's meaning.

"Your name stands for truth and honor," said grandma, "and I want my little grandchild to be all that her name implies. I am sorry to know that you forgot your name today—first, when you made Nannie think that I had given you permission to use my velvet cloak, and secondly, when you let her bear an equal share of the punishment which really you alone deserved. I am sure that God expects us to live up to the meaning of our names, for you remember He chose that His Son should bear on earth the name of Jesus, because it meant that He should save His people from their sins, and God knew the dear Saviour would carry out its meaning in His life."

There was a short silence, then Vera said, very humbly: "Grandma, I'm sorrier than I was before. I was sorry then because I had broken and spoiled your things; but now I'm sorry because I told that story and acted so mean to Nannie. I never knew about my name before; I'll try to remember it after this, and will you help me?"

"Indeed I will, my darling," said grandma, warmly, kissing her forehead.

And so they made the compact.

"HONOR BEFORE HONORS."

THE children were all again at grandma's for the holidays, and with a larger company than usual. Vera was not there, having gone home to England to spend Christmas with her papa, much benefited by her stay with her kind, wise grandmother; but besides the eleven other grandchildren you know of, there were five little newcomers to take her place; and among the five two sets of twins—a fact of which everybody in the family seemed very proud.

Bertie and Duncan were Western boys—about four years old, and the roundest, sturdiest, most mischievous little fellows you ever came across. They hadn't been in the old "mansion" a day before they had investigated it from the big playroom in the garret to the tiny window in the basement laundry, through which they peeped, on tip-toes, to see the sparrows eat up the crumbs cook had thrown out on the snow. The other twins were a boy and girl, Siegfried and Marguerite—delicate little creatures, born while uncle Max and aunt Louise were living in Germany. They were pretty children; speaking more German than English, and clinging to their nurse Gretchen with a shyness that very much amused the sturdy little Westerners, to whom shyness was an unknown quality. They immediately proceeded to play tricks of all sorts upon these little cousins, jumping out on them from unexpected corners; pretending to be soldiers who had come to carry them off; and shouting with laughter on Christmas morning to see Siegfried and Marguerite shrink startled away from the big jack-in-the-box which Duncan threw on their bed. But, unquestionably, the hero of this holiday season was the new baby—aunt Nora's rosy, sweet-tempered boy, who laughed and crowed and kicked and cooed himself right into everybody's good graces. He was called Paul, but he was not yet baptized, and a great excitement ran through the house when it was rumored that he was to be christened on New-Year Day.

There had been a happy, jolly Christmas, which dear old grandma and grandpa had enjoyed quite as much as their sons and daughters and grandchildren. There had been all sorts of entertainments and fun during the holiday week, and it had gone—as Douglas said—"like a flash," and the children were wondering on Friday morning what new thing grandma could possibly think of for their pleasure on New-Year Day, when Murray came bounding up into the big garret where the children were playing.

"Say, Helen," he called, as his head appeared above the level of the garret floor, "you're wanted down in grandma's room—instanter. A great honor awaits you, young lady, I can tell you." Murray was now in college, and considered himself rather above what he was pleased to call the "small fry," so his presence in the playroom and his exceedingly gracious demeanor on this occasion at once secured attention.

Helen sat on the floor by one of the "port-holes," making a hood for Marguerite's doll, but she rose immediately. "What is it, Mur.? do you know?" she asked, shaking bits of thread and clippings from her frock.

Murray balanced himself on the railing; he was evidently only too glad to tell. "The kid—Paul—is to be christened on New-Year Day," he said, slowly, enjoying the effect of his announcement on his audience, "and grandpa and I are to be the godfathers!"

"Oh!" "Ah!" "Don't say!" "Is that so?" "In the church?" "Isn't that jolly!" "I've never been to a christening," came from the surprised and interested children as they crowded about him.

"Don't get excited, my young friends," continued Murray, waving them gently back with both arms; "the most astonishing part of my information is yet to come. It is but natural that two such estimable and worthy people as grandpa and I should be called upon to fill a responsible position; but when you learn that Helen—*Helen!*—is to be the sole and only godmother of the noble infant, I know your feelings will be beyond expression."

"I?" cried Helen, breathlessly.

"Helen?" exclaimed Joyce, dropping her book in her surprise. "Well, I declare!"

"Helen?" repeated Nannie and the boys, in an astonishment only equaled by Helen's own. "Now if it had been Elsie!" added Nannie.

"I'm glad it's you, Nelly," said grave-faced Elsie, who as usual had been buried in a book. "Aunt Nora and grandma know what they're doing—you are the best of us all."

"O Elsie, don't say that!" Helen broke in, coloring up; "perhaps Murray's just saying this to tease me."

"That's all the thanks one gets for his pains!" Murray's tone was martyr-like; then he added, to Helen, "Did I or did I not tell you that your grandmother and aunt required your presence in the state chamber?"

"Oh yes, I'm going," cried Helen, and in a great flutter of excitement she flew down the steps to grandma's room. Here sat the dear granny, and aunt Nora and Helen's mamma. "Come in, my dear," called grandma; then, drawing the little girl to her side, she told Helen that aunt Nora had indeed chosen her to be godmother to little Paul, and that the service would take place on New-Year Day at three o'clock, in the old brown church which grandpa and grandma had attended for so many years. Aunt Nora had chosen this particular opportunity for the christening because she wanted the whole family to be present, and it seemed not possible to get everybody together at any other season of the year.

"O grandma!" was all Helen could say at first, when grandma stopped speaking, though her cheeks were flushed a pretty pink and her brown eyes were shining. Then, with a shy glance at her mother and aunt, she added, earnestly: "O mamma! O aunt Nora! *do* you think I'm good enough to be Paul's godmother?"

Mamma smiled at her excited little daughter, and aunt Nora took Helen's face between her two hands. "I have chosen you, Nelly," she said, "as I have Murray, not because you are so very good, but because I believe you to be truthful and honorable, and that you are trying to be all that a little Christian should be. As you and Murray live near us, your example will be constantly before Paul and your influence over him, and I am glad to say that I feel sure of both being helpful to him. I know more of your every-day life than you think, Helen, and taking the ups and the downs together, my dear, I have such a confidence in you and respect for you that I want you to be my boy's sponsor and help me to train him."

This was quite a wonderful speech for quiet aunt Nora to make, and Helen was so overcome by the unexpected compliments she had received that she became dreadfully embarrassed; but she was saved further remark, for just at this moment the sitting-room door flew open, and in poured the children in a body, all talking at once—eager to know if what Murray had said were indeed true. And when reassured on that point their wonder and interest knew no bounds.

Though secretly pleased, and realizing the responsibility which he was to assume, Murray refused to talk the matter over with any of the "small fry," and carried himself straighter than ever. But Helen belonged to them, and many and constant were the remarks addressed to her on the subject. Nannie and Joyce gave her a great deal of friendly counsel as to how *they* should behave had either of them been chosen in her stead, but with their advice was also an unconscious deference that was very flattering to Helen. Grandpa kissed her very tenderly with a whispered "Little godmother!" and even the boys treated her with unusual politeness.

The solemn feeling with which Helen had

heard of her new responsibility began to fade during the day, and she wondered, as she walked with her mamma to Tiffany's to choose a spoon for Paul, if any of the girls of her own age that she met had ever had such a compliment paid them, and if the salesman in the big store wouldn't have been a little deferential to her, as well as to mamma, if he had known. This feeling seemed to grow instead of lessen during the evening and the next day; it was an odd little feeling of self-importance, that Helen was not used to, and which she did not recognize at first. She found herself settling little discussions and disputed questions among her playmates with a decided manner that was new to her, and which, rather to her surprise, the other children resented—Helen's influence over them had hitherto been a very gentle one.

She was sitting in the library that afternoon when grandpa and uncle Rollie came in. Uncle Rollie carried a large flat parcel done up in light brown paper. "What you dot, unkie Rollie?" asked Duncan, putting a little hand on the parcel; but uncle Rollie lifted it high above the little boy's head, then laid it in the middle of the big library table. "It's nothing for you, little man," he said, swinging Duncan to his shoulder, "and nothing you'd like half so well as a pick-a-back ride. Come on, for a gallop up to mamma." Then as he passed Helen, uncle Rollie said rapidly: "Don't let *anybody* touch that parcel, Nelly. I don't want the contents seen till later."

"I'll take care of it," Helen said, with a quick smile of comprehension; but soon after she became so interested in her book that she forgot all about the parcel until she heard Bertie's voice say: "Oh *ee!* Duncan! Siegfried! I say, tome see these pitty pitchers!" and there, to her surprise and dismay, was the small boy lying flat on the library table, his heels in the air, deliberately turning over the leaves of the large book which had been in the brown paper parcel!

"No, no, Bertie," she cried, flying to his side and lifting him bodily off the table. "You must not touch that book—you know you are a naughty little boy to get on grandma's library table. Come, stop crying like a good child, and play games with Siegfried and Marguerite in the hall."

But Bertie's feelings were hurt at his sudden and unexpected descent from the table, and it was some time before Helen could quiet him and return to see if any mischief had been done. She intended to just glance over the leaves Bertie had turned to see if his careless little fingers had soiled them; but the name of the book caught her eye and her fancy at once —" Historic Highways and Byways of Old England." Helen loved history—particularly English history—and these illustrations were most beautiful. How she did want to look through the handsome volume—perhaps she really ought to do so, she told herself, to see whether Bertie had done damage to any part of it; one never could be sure of such a little fidget. Though Helen distinctly remembered uncle Rollie's words, " Don't let *anybody* touch that parcel," she gradually managed to convince herself that what he said was meant only for the little ones; and drawing the book of English views under the library lamp, she began turning the leaves over slowly, and reading a little bit here and there.

It was so delightfully interesting that she forgot all about the way the time was flying, until the sound of her young uncle's voice in the hall roused her from her enjoyment with a guilty start. "I'm just going to the corner," uncle Rollie said to somebody who was with him, "and when I come back I've something pretty to show you."

"He means the book," thought Helen, uneasily; and then her eyes fell on the page she was holding between her finger and thumb, and, to her great consternation, there on the beautiful broad margin was a soiled, damp spot! That she must have done it, Helen knew at once, for Bertie had not reached that part of the book, and it had not been there a minute before when she turned the page. In vain she rubbed the spot with her handkerchief; it re-

Helen at the window.

(Honor before Honors.)

fused to stir. A noise in the hall startled her, and hastily slipping the book back into its wrapper, she laid the parcel in the middle of the library table just where uncle Rollie had placed it, and seating herself in the deep window-seat, waited for her uncle's return. "I'll tell him when he comes in," she thought.

But when he did come, a few minutes after, and took up his parcel with a bright questioning "All right?" Helen nodded, and answered "All right," without another word.

"Thanks, faithful little sentinel," said uncle Rollie, dropping a lovely fragrant rose into her lap as he passed out. "You shall be the first, after mother, to see what I have here."

As the portières fell into place behind him the little girl leaned her head against the window-sill with a very unhappy feeling. "I *do* wish I hadn't looked through his book, or that I had told him about it," she thought; "I feel so mean." And just at this particular moment what should come distinctly to Helen's memory but aunt Nora's words—the words which had given the little girl such pleasure—"I believe you to be truthful and honorable"—on that account she had chosen Helen to be little Paul's sponsor!

Ah! Helen caught her breath quickly, and unconsciously hugged closer to her Marguerite's doll, which she had picked up from the library floor. Suddenly conscience-stricken, she realized that the manner in which she had fulfilled uncle Rollie's trust was neither truthful nor honorable. She knew very well that the right thing to do now was to go straight to him and confess how matters really stood. She had not the least doubt of his forgiveness—uncle Rollie was too like grandma to be anything but generous; but if she did that, then she must also tell aunt Nora, and *she* would never let such a mean, dishonorable girl be godmother to her dear, beautiful baby. Perhaps she would choose Elsie instead, or Joyce, and then everybody would have to know why it was the change was made. How ashamed mamma and papa would be of her; and Helen could see the look of surprise and disappointment in grandpa's and grandma's face. "I *ought* to do it, I know I ought," she thought, miserably, "but oh, how can I *ever?*"

"Time to dress for dinner, Helen," cried Nannie, putting her curly head between the portières. "Come on, we'll go upstairs together."

That evening was one of the most unhappy Helen ever spent—everybody was so kind and complimentary, and she felt keenly how little she deserved it. When uncle Rollie brought the brown paper parcel and laid it on his mother's lap with, "Here's a secret that Helen and I've been keeping this afternoon," Helen slipped out of the room and sat on the stairs in the hall—she couldn't endure it another moment.

How happy everybody seemed to be, and how very unhappy she was! And it was all her own fault—she felt that. Oh, if she only could get up courage enough to tell the truth! She half rose, then sank back. "They'd all have to know, and Murray and all the boys would despise me," she thought. "And yet I *ought* to." In a few minutes she rose again, this time to her feet. "I'm just going to do it," she said aloud, a look of determination replacing the indecision in her face, "though I *know* she won't let me be godmother." She ran quickly up the stairs and along the hall, and as she ran she kept saying very earnestly to herself: "*Please*, God, help me to do it; *please*, God, help me to do it."

And He certainly did, for when Helen entered aunt Nora's room in answer to her pleasant "Come in," the little girl felt so much quieter and braver that, had she had time to think of it, she would have been very much surprised. Aunt Nora was rocking Paul and singing to him, in the hope of getting him to sleep, but the crow with which the little fellow greeted Helen, and his bright eyes, showed that the "Sand-man" was still far away. One glance at Helen's face told aunt Nora that something was wrong; with quick sympathy she drew the little girl to her side, and it was leaning on her shoulder that Helen told her story—very humbly, not excusing or passing over a single item, and with hot blushes of shame and tears of contrition.

"I am grieved that my little girl should have fallen into temptation," aunt Nora said, gently, when the story was finished; "but more thankful than I can tell you, dear Helen, that you were honest and brave enough to tell the truth, though you knew how hard the punishment might be. 'Honor before honors'—God's approval before man's approbation—is the best motto in the world to live up to, and one that I hope will always be yours. Now, you must go tell uncle Rollie what you have told me, and after you have won his forgiveness I know you will feel happier." Then, in answer to the shy questioning expression in Helen's dark eyes, she added: "We won't speak of the sponsorship to-night, Helen; to-morrow morning I will let you know what is to be done about it. Good-night, my dear." She kissed Helen affectionately, and then the little girl went away to look for her uncle.

Uncle Rollie's expression of surprise cut Helen to the quick, but his forgiveness was fully and instantly granted. "I'm glad you've told me," he said, "as we had come across the disfigured page, and feeling sure it had not been done here, I intended taking it back to the publishers and asking for a perfect copy. Now, of course, we'll keep it."

And it was the kind young uncle who declared that no one should know of Helen's fault besides himself but those immediately interested—Helen's parents and grandma.

But Helen told Murray herself before breakfast the next morning—which was Sunday—New-Year Day fell on Sunday that year—while they were in the library alone together. Murray had called her in; he had his Prayer Book open at the "Public Baptism of Infants," and he made room for Helen to sit beside him on the small tête-à-tête seat, even throwing an arm across her shoulder to keep her steady.

"Let's read the service over together," he said, "so we'll understand clearly all about it, and know what to say this afternoon."

Then Helen told him all about the trouble, and that she did not now expect to be Paul's godmother. Oh, how ashamed she felt!

Murray gave a long, low whistle of surprise, but it was a great comfort to Helen that he did not take his arm away. "What'll we do if you come to grief this way?" he said, thoughtfully. "Why, I quite depended on you to help me do my duty by the little chap. Yes, I know it's hard to be good"—with an emphatic nod of his head. "Talk about temptations—you don't know anything about what they are till you come to a boys' college; some of those fellows don't seem to know the first thing about honor, and they make fun of the ones that do. That's a good motto aunt Nora told you about—'Honor before honors.' I guess we'd better both try to live up to it, if we're to be of any use to Paul, for you know we'll have to set him a good example."

"I *am* going to try," Helen said, with a quiver in her voice; "but, Murray, you forget—I'm not to be Paul's godmother."

"Yes, you are, dear Helen"—there was aunt Nora right beside them, a bright smile on her sweet face; "your uncle George and I have talked the matter over, and we still wish that you should be Paul's sponsor. Will you?"

"Oh, aunt Nora!" gasped Helen, almost speechless with surprise and happiness, "how kind you are!"

"Hurrah!" shouted Murray, and forgetting his dignity in his delight, he threw his arms around aunt Nora and Helen and gave them a desperate bear's-hug, then dashed out of the room with a very red face.

About three o'clock that afternoon a large party were in the old brown church on Stuyvesant Square. Grandma was there, and all the aunts and uncles and grandchildren, and in the half-circle that stood before the font were uncle George, and aunt Nora, with Paul in her arms, and dear old grandpa, and Helen and Murray. Very clearly came the sponsors' responses, and very solemn and earnest were the faces of the young godfather and godmother as they went sureties for little Paul.

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